

Perspectives 2019



*Vision is the art of seeing
what is invisible to others*

Jonathan Swift

Perspectives

A Journal of Art and Literature

Published annually by the Creative Writing I and II, Art, and Computer Design classes

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Timberland High School
Advanced Business Technology Class

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May 2019

Volume XV

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Poetry

“Poetry is language at its most
distilled and most powerful.”

Rita Dove

The Feelings of a Broken Teenager

Katie Manker

I hate when you brag about other girls
Or when we say goodnight
I hate that you fuel the pit in my stomach
and how the timing was never right

I hate how you always speak your mind,
Like when you say the worst things at the worst times
I hate my fingers spamming the refresh,
Waiting for you to respond feels like 3 lifetimes

I hate when you see me at my worst
Especially when you act like you don't care
I hate how I didn't want you when you wanted me
And now I can't have you, it's not fair

I hate how you make me the happiest,
the stupid smile you put on my face
I hate when I can't get you off my mind
Or when our eyes lock, it puts me in a daze

I hate how you can make or break my day
And how I was too late
I hate how you can fill my heart with love
Then make it deflate

I hate that I miss when we hung out for hours
Or how empty I feel when you leave
I hate that you don't call me beautiful anymore
And what I would give to rest my head on your sleeve

But most of all,
I hate how I could never hate you.

Thought Loop

Nora Pryor

Sunshine drizzled sympathy
From those who can't reach me
A bogged-down romantic who exaggerates
Existential

There's so much behind these eyes
That no one will ever see
Constellations braided in ropes
But fogged and blockaded by a mournful winter

I could be so much more
Like the crescendo in a melody

But
I tie myself into who I want to be
And I don't know if I want the responsibility

I heard it once
Said
That once you lose everything, you are free
But do I want
To jump off that cliff
And let you have me

Because what I have left

Is pitiful dignity
And just by bragging about my problems
I lose a little bit more

I'm not humble
Honestly, I'm just a moody teen
Sad boi hours, XD

Oh God forbid
This fluorescent light existence is so miniscule
My temples are exhausted
I live in tandem of the future and present
Can't escape
Can't live now

Life as we know it is a 9 year old's birthday party
And a crowd of mourners in Jordan
It's also the sound of screaming men in Vietnam
And a book of Guinness World Records at your Scholastic book fair

We idolize logic
Give me some supernatural
Send me something, please
I need your hand to reach and grab mine

A cynical mess of a 14 year old girl
Detached and starved for innocence
I've been through too much and nothing at all
And though I've left the country only twice I've explored universes you can't even fathom
An endless chasm
Of who I am and who I hope to be

The great pretender lives in me
A synthetic smile
Sleep darts sent out of my mouth
To distract you from the things you long to see

It's a lonely town in these walls
And you don't wanna go there
I don't know how to reach you
Leave a message at the tone
A rotting husk of epiphany
Action is sparse and life is short

Watching suns rise and set
While I fantasize about evaporating

Back to the future
A thought loop again
Color-filled soliloquy
Life is a stage darling
A mindless monologue we recite
Formulated especially
To whisk you under the sea foam

You're next, my dear
You won't see the bitterness coming
Until you're laying in your bed at 2 am
Pondering your suburban life and its vanilla meaning

Something obscure and charming
In a minor 7th chord
God Bless America
And its predisposed form

Holy daylight
The scent of wind
Dancing starshine
Bending down to love you

Another time and in another place
There's hope again
It's screaming in a locked closet
I just have to find the key

But my pulse keeps a steady beat
Even after a finite machine stops beeping
I extend on in every direction
I will be in the Earth
The Earth will be in me
I am beyond an exit and entrance
Just another entr'acte of adlibs
The world doesn't define me
Release the tension in my shoulders
Breath
I'm ready to be seen

What Is It?

Ashton Estill

What is it about the warm wind of spring,
That makes you not want to do anything?
That makes you stare out the window and wish away,
The chores and the worries and the frets of the day.

What is it about the falling snow,
That makes the world seem like there's nothing to show?
That makes it so beautiful and so of peace,
I cannot fathom, so let the mystery increase.

What is it about the twinkling stars,
That you are told are so very far,
But they're fractions of light in the darkness of velvet,
Little pieces of Heaven, and my sorrow I forget.

These are life's shrouded mysteries,
Contemplated through the world's histories,
But if the answers so suddenly came,
Would we wish to dream again?

So in my opinion, let them be,
And make our own answers for the mystery,

It's better this way, for the sake of mankind,
To let us explore our human minds.

Why Can't Life Be Like the Movies?

Ashton Estill

What is it about the warm wind of spring,
That makes you not want to do anything?
That makes you stare out the window and wish away,
The chores and the worries and the frets of the day.

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So in my opinion, let them be,
And make our own answers for the mystery,

It's better this way, for the sake of mankind,
To let us explore our human minds.

It's crazy how they make it seem,
Like drastic changes can be fun.
Ha! It's definitely possible, I know,
But it's easier said than done.

And, most of all . . .

Why can't life be like the movies
When a loved one passes away?
Why is it that somewhere, somehow in the books,
There's always another way?
Like how they again see those who have gone
The way of all the earth?
Resurrection, communication, and other things,
And always the thought of rebirth.

Truth is, even though you wait,
Those you love aren't coming back to life,
Anytime soon, leaving you to think,
Why the world gives you this strife.

Why can't life be like the movies,
When you feel like you're going under?
But maybe it's like this because we need to hope
That there's beauty behind the thunder.

I sit here in perfect incompleteness,
Wiser than I used to be,
Yet there's a price, in order to be wise,
I'm haunted by the memories.

Short Stories

“You can always edit a bad page.
You can’t edit a blank page.”

Jodi Picoult

Blacken the Waters

Ashton Estill

1699 - Enter Edward Teach

To say I was annoyed was a very large understatement. In fact, one could go as far to say I was agitated or maybe even angry. However, I think the best way to describe my mood at the moment is infuriated. I already hadn't intended to return to the Caribbean or Port Royal, but it had been necessary. In my uneasy state, seeing as I was too close to the place I'd fled from years prior, I ventured to the local tavern. Taverns are enjoyable, a place for men to be relaxing, a time for pleasure and forgetting.

Yet here I am, a passed out drunk at my feet and vomit down my front. The man had been loud, and the most foul-mouthed drunk I'd ever heard, and I lived with a full crew of sailors. He had been very audible from the street as I had walked up to the tavern. Just as I was about to walk in, he stumbled out and promptly threw up. On me.

Years of self control was all that kept me from running him through on my blade in the moment. Instead, I let him fall to the ground as he passed out, stepping over the body and demanding the tavern owner find me a cloth to clean the bilge-rat's filth from me.

A fresh coat and two tankards of rum later, I was in a much better mood, but my peace was quickly

interrupted. I'm not sure when the drunkard walked back in, but he managed to stumble my way and collapse into the seat next to me at the bar, knocking over some of the other patron's drinks. I shoot him a scowl, having grabbed my own drink before he could displace it. He barely notices of course, and tries to order another round. I scoff softly at the sight, annoyed.

He had noticed and turned to face me. He squinted hard, as if trying to recognize me. "Aren't you that fella who tried making out with the nun?" I almost killed him then and there. "No," my voice was as cold and steely as my blade, "I'm the man you threw up on when you decided to stumbled into me."

"Ah. Yeah, sorry bout that mate. Heck of a night." He seemed unfazed at the inconvenience he had caused.

I frowned at him, but said nothing more. It was my hope that I'd never have to interact with this inconsiderate drunkard ever again. People like him were absolutely useless. I was shaken from my thoughts by an incessant poking in to arm. My head whipped around to see the bearded drunk.

"What?" I asked coldly, hoping he would get the hint. A hand was stuck in my face and it took a moment for me to realize that he was trying to introduce himself. "The name's Teach. Edward Teach." He said with a drunken grin.

I stared at the hand for a moment before tentatively shaking it, still wary. "William. William Reed."

1703 - The Crow

The Crow. It was a positively ridiculous nickname.

"You think so? I thought it rather suited you, with you always being hunched up, with those beady looking eyes. You look like you'd very much like to peck someone to death." Teach snickered lightly as my head swiveled around to meet his gaze.

“Excuse me?”

“Just like that actually,” he shook with contained laughter. “You’ve got the scowl dow-ah!” He yelped as he was pushed into the water. I watched as he spluttered and failed around, frowning down at him from my spot on the dock.

“Damn it, Will! What was that for?” He glowered up at me.

“Because you’re a pretentious little clod.” I ignored him as he ranted at me from the harbor water. I suppose he had a bit of a point with the crow comments... Honestly, it wouldn’t have been the first time that someone had compared me to one of the black harbingers of death. Whether it was my personality, adaptability, or the fact that I probably looked like one, someone found some way to connect me to the bird. I don’t know who had said it, but after one person shouted about the resemblance in one too many taverns, word had spread. Now everyone was calling me the Crow.

I glanced back down at my acquaintance, chuckling at his misery before I jumped in, landing on top of him. He shouted, flailing again as he tried to get me off of him. I laughed as I swam back a little, allowing him his room to float.

“You’re awful.” He spat out, and I laughed at him again.

“Probably.” I agreed. I sighed softly as we watched the sun finish setting from next to the docks. Who could have guessed that we’d become...were we friends? Whatever this was, I hadn’t expected it.

Edward wasn’t the same man who had stumbled into me at a tavern and thrown up on me. The man in front of me now was a rising prodigy in sailing, having already worked for some notable merchant ships. I was just lucky enough to have caught him while he was in the market.

I'm not sure what had drawn me to come back to the wretched Caribbean yet again, but here I was and once again I found myself in the company of the man who'd gotten drunker than a pig. The same man I'd nearly killed for upheaving on me. And now, the man who'd become a friend of sorts. Fate certainly had interesting ways of messing with me...

1706 - Proposition

"You should sail with me, Edward."

He looked startled by my statement. "Sail? With you?" He asked as if I had told him to sail off the edge of a waterfall or something.

"Yes, with me, you clod."

"I'll pass on that one, oh fearsome Lord Crow."

He drawled, giving me a mock salute.

I raised an unimpressed eyebrow at him and his antics. "I'm being serious, Edward. You're a skilled sailor. I could use someone like you." And he really was. His nautical skills had only gotten better since I had last seen him, and he was a skilled fighter to boot.

He sat in silence for a moment, as if contemplating it. "A privateer, huh? Sounds interesting, but I'll have to pass, old friend. I make far more money on these merchant ships."

"We shall see."

Two years later, the dodgy sailor had finally relented and joined me in the privateering business, serving under me on the Inky Murder. The Spanish War of Succession is still in full swing and us privateers were in very high demand.

I can tell Edward is enjoying himself immensely on our commissioned raids. Probably more than he should be. It's a bit worrying to me, especially considering that I lost many years of my life to piracy. It was a lifestyle that I had wanted to leave behind, but was unable to,

instead channeling the very skills I had learned into the privateering business. It was also a lifestyle that Edward seemed to be taking a liking to.

However, I couldn't focus on that. Not now, while there is a war raging around us and a battle in the air. It's just something I'll have to confront him about later. I just hope he listens to reason this time.

1713 - Blackbeard

I honestly don't know whether to feel infuriated or not. Teach, the blasted fool, had actually stayed in the Caribbean. To be a pirate. Did he not listen to a thing I said? Of course, when did Edward ever listen to anything I say? No, bloody Edward Teach was off galavanting around like a fool with that scoundrel, Hornigold. After the countless warnings about getting involved with the buccaneers and pirates, Edward still chose to seek out that lifestyle.

"Edward, you're going to get yourself killed one of these days." I muttered to myself.

I would have liked to think that this folly was a temporary thing, that Edward would tire of the Caribbean and the buccaneers and return home swiftly. I knew better though. Edward was as fierce and as stormy as the ocean that now divides us, a hurricane amongst the trickling streams of other men's resolves. If Edward really wanted this, there really wasn't anything I could do. Not against a man as stubborn as him.

I sighed. "At least he had the decency to write to me directly..." I squinted at the paper as I read the scrawl at the bottom. What in the name of all things holy is with this name? Going by your beard color...Edward, you're so unimaginative. "Blackbeard," I scoffed. "Who would be afraid of a name like that?"

1719 - To Glory

I reread the note in my hand for the fourth time that hour.

Edward was dead.

He had been killed off the shore of North Carolina in late November last year. He had been dead for almost two months and I had only now found out. I had been expecting something like this to happen, but it still didn't erase the shock of it happening.

I couldn't describe what I was feeling that moment. Sadness? Anger? Remorse? Guilt? I hadn't spoken to the man since two years after he'd become a pirate. Edward had made his choice when he decided to take up that life. I warned him and he hadn't listened, and now he was dead. Beheaded and paraded around quite gruesomely from what I had read.

Four years...was it worth it Edward? Was the adventure all you'd hoped for?

Locking myself in the captain's cabin, I collapsed in my chair. I needed to be alone before I decided to do anything stupid. I poured two glasses of rum, taking one of them in hand. I glanced at the latter now resting on my desk before my eyes darted to a portrait of the other man.

"It seems that even in death you remain inconvenient, Edward," I murmured before I raised the glass in a salute. "May you sail the seas to glory in the afterlife, my friend. And if God be kind, I shall meet you there."

I tilted the glass, taking a long drink of the burning liquid. The taste lingered in my mouth, comforting me through the rest of the night, and into the morn.

-End-

Ruin

Ashton Estill

The only world she'd come to know was the one of pain, suffering, survival and hunger. Especially hunger. When she'd awoken, the first thing that she could even comprehend was the unquenchable desire to feed. This sensation was all-consuming, quickly overtaking all other senses until it was all she knew. This was the first thing she'd come to know and should have been the only thing she'd come to understand. It wasn't until she'd fed for the first time that she was able to regain any semblance of sanity. And that small semblance changed so much more than she would ever realize.

When she first saw the world itself there was a strange stir inside of her, a weird and foreign feel in her newborn life. While first thing she'd felt was hunger, the thing that connected her to every other being like her, the second thing was the sensation that separated her by worlds from her brethren. Wonder. This new, inescapable feeling overpowered even the hunger that had consumed her so feverishly in the beginning, the feeling that should have directed everything she did. But now, she felt a new urge, one that drew her away from the others. She felt longing, want and curiosity all at once, this swirl of oddly familiar yet brand new senses driving her to take her first steps away. So she turned.

She gazed towards the large towering figures in the distance, stared at the strange brightness that glistened off of the churning creature below. The creature never stilled as it pounded against the cliff below, spanning so far into the horizon that she could not see an end to it. This constantly shifting thing captured her attention more-so than the brightness that had led her eyes to it in the first place. She then became aware of sound for the first time.

This massive body was loud, the roaring and splashing and mesh of so many different, yet similar sounds. She was fascinated by this too. So she leaned down to touch it, pressing against the barrier holding her back. She reached, stretching towards the raging monster below, just as her brethren reached for their food behind her. She felt confusion and irritation when she was unable to touch the thing below her. She continued to reach, gradually leaning more and more over the irritating wall. As she stretched down towards the raging monster below, there was a bump from behind, one of her brethren having been flung into her. She fell. And suddenly she was surrounded.

Everything was spinning and churning, sucking her down and spitting her back up again. Her brain wasn't processing anything, couldn't process anything. This unwitting dance between girl and monster continued, the monster having took the lead in the deadly joining of limbs and relentless waves. She closed her eyes as she was jostled around, eventually succumbing to the darkness.

There are muffled shouts as the body is discovered on the beach. It had looked strange enough to warrant a closer look, one that revealed an unconscious zombie. The undead creature was quickly loaded into the back of a secure vehicle and driven to the San Diego Biomedical

Research Facility. An armored escort led the vehicle through the streets, bashing several other zombies that had attacked out of the way. Alarms blared as the gates to the facility opened, allowing them in. Several guards on towers watched, making sure no unsavory creatures tried to get in. The gates closed and the trucks pulled into the facility, main doors shutting behind her.

The new specimen was carried into a stark white room with a one-way mirror. This way it could be observed, and it would be none the wiser. After the door was sealed, the scientists outside of the room bustled around, preparing various machines and the like for when the creature would wake. Despite all the preparation and eagerness to see the specimen, no one had noticed when it had woken up, nor when it started walking around and looking at the walls, ignoring the corpse it was supposed to feed on. It took a surprised shriek from one of the scientists to get the rest of them to pay attention and to see what their specimen was now doing.

To say Adelaine Morgan was fascinated was an understatement.

Since the start of the apocalypse, She had yet to see anything quite like this. It was a zombie, of course, but this creature in front of her was most certainly the strangest specimen of it's kind. Since they had brought it to the research center, it hadn't shown a single act of hostility or aggression. It hadn't even made for the rotting corpse left for it in the cell for it to feed. Rather, it just stared at the two way mirror with an almost intrigued expression.

When her father suggests that it knows they are watching, she disagrees. 'No,' she thinks. 'It's watching itself.' The curious mannerisms show as it approached the mirror, focused on something that they couldn't see.

'It's reflection.' The creature was showing signs of self awareness now.

None of the previous specimens had showed any interest in the mirror until they could smell human flesh behind it. At that point, they had become volatile and aggressively began to throw themselves at the glass. Most had to be put down or restrained after they reached that point. But this one...This zombie was observing and studying the mirror intently. And finally, it moved its hand. It was a slow process, watching the decaying creature try to raise its arm, but it succeeded and it gets its hand on the glass. It seemed to be transfixed as it did this, watching what the pair couldn't see very intently now.

Adelaine turned to look at her father, hoping to glimpse what he might be thinking. His face was stonier than she'd ever seen it.

Cadmus Morgan was unhappy. That was more than an understatement. The zombies aren't supposed to have self awareness, and the one in front of him now appeared to be gaining that and much more at an alarming rate. If there was a chance that one could regain humanity...It would change everything. It didn't matter if his own curiosity demanded he study this further, he had a job to do.

He knew that the total eradication of the creatures could be put off even longer if it turned out that they could become intelligent life again. The zombies needed to go, and that was just how it was in his mind. As intriguing as the specimen was, the world needed the zombie threat gone. There was no saving them, even if they reverted back to a human state. How would one justify the cannibalism of their own kind? And how many more might kill themselves in horror of what they had done? The zombies had to go, and that was final.

Adelaine noticed when her father stiffened. It startles her because she'd hardly ever seen him look so tense. When she looked back to the specimen, she released a startled gasp. The creature had moved its hand from the mirror to its face, as if it was finally realizing that it was staring at itself. The father-daughter duo gawk as it watched itself before something even more unusual followed. It opened its mouth and released a strange and inhuman sound. Its first attempt at words.

Adelaine herself watched in awe as it continued to make an effort to speak before it finally spoke something intelligible within the slurs.

“M-meee...”

The soft creaking of the voice was like a gunshot in the dead quiet. Adeline stood in dumbfounded silence as her father moved somewhere out of her vision, shouting something to another scientist. It was all muffled noise to her; she was focused on the zombie in front of her. To hear it speak...it just proved that at one point, this had been a human.

The creature itself looked halfway through decay and corruption. Remnants of hair dye showed that the zombie once had bright purple hair, although most of the color had faded away, along with the normal hair pigment. Its hair had eventually stopped growing out, leaving a pale, whitish shade behind at the roots. Its eyes were the most disturbing however, milky white orbs that looked partly bloodshot.

It was reaching for the mirror again when the guards burst into the room and grabbed it by the arms, careful to keep away from its mouth. Its face was contorted strangely, as if it was trying to look afraid. ‘Or angry.’ Adelaine thought.

The air was pierced by an inhuman screech. ‘Definitely not happy.’ Adelaine ran towards the control panel, only to be blocked by her father.

He shook his head. “Leave it.” He said nothing else as they dragged the howling specimen away. She watched silently.

“What will they do?”

Her father stared after them, face hard and steely. “I don’t know. I’m not sure about anything anymore.” He turned to look at his daughter. “I don’t know what we’re going to do now.” The scientist in him was screaming to observe and learn about this thing, while the paranoid realist wanted to destroy it before word got out. There’s were so many questions, so many things to consider. And the infallible doctor had no answer.

At what point did curiosity become obsolete? When did exploration come second to the sense of safety? When did terror become the only thing to rule? His voice came out in an almost inaudible whisper.

“I don’t know what’s right anymore...”

The Years Following

Brooklynn Graham

The room erupted in laughter as the comedian on the radio finished his joke. I smiled as I turned my attention to my brothers and sisters huddled around the radio. It was nice to see smiles on their faces, especially after everything we've been through these past few years. My gaze passed over the twins, James and Joel, and then to Jessie. When I got down the line to Julia, I remembered why father wasn't in the room, but before I could get lost in thought the radio turned to static. Bewildered, my head jerked to the radio as a news reporter's voice came over.

"We interrupt your daily entertainment to bring you some breaking news! Today, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that he is putting his New Deal in play! The New Deal will help bring the great United States of America out of this Great Depression! Stay tuned for more news later!" Then there was static and the comedian's voice was back.

"Jo," I turned my head toward Jessie, "what's a New Deal?" Jessie is almost nine years old and she is just starting to get curious about politics. When I was nine, I was curious about the latest fashion trends.

"Well, Jessie, the New Deal is a plan that President Roosevelt came up with to help people like us get more money and be happier," I attempted to dumb it down as much as I could.

“But I am happy,” I just looked at her and smiled softly as I got up to make dinner. On the way to the kitchen I stopped by father’s room to check on him. It has been a while since I’ve seen him walking around, and I honestly could care less about him, but a con to being the oldest is taking care of others. Including those who don’t treat you correctly.

“Father?” I knock on the wood door and slowly open it, “It’s me, Josephine. I just wanted to check up on you and let you know I’m going to start dinner.” His room was dark but he was sitting at a desk in the corner with a small lamp on. He had a bottle of whiskey in one hand and a photograph in the other. My father used to be a great writer but after mother’s death he gave up the pencil and picked up a bottle of whiskey instead. Father turned his head and looked at me. His eyes were red and I could tell he’d been crying.

“Get outta here! I don’t care!” he yelled and chucked the whisky toward me. I closed the door right as the bottle hit it and shattered. I stood there facing the closed door with my hand still on the knob for a moment to recompose myself. On my way back to the kitchen all the kids were looking toward me.

“He’s gotten worse, hasn’t he?” Joel asked.

“It’s okay. I’m okay,” I avoided his question.

“But is he gonna be okay?”

“I don’t know.”

When I got to the kitchen, I opened the cabinet door there was just a half a loaf of bread and a can of green beans. I moved to the icebox and it was also empty aside from half a milk bottle. I didn’t realize it was already time to go to the market again.

“Hey James, Joel,” I called to the boys.

“What?” “Yeah?” the twins reply in unison.

“I need you guys to run to the market to pick up some food.”

“Ugh. Why can’t you do it? I don’t wanna,” James complained.

“You’re gonna do it because I asked you to. So unless you wanna starve, I suggest you go to the market to get some food,” Joel was already standing and taking the coins from my hand. He was always a better listener than James, “Thank you.” The boys left and I was there with the girls listening to the radio. The comedian kept talking but I couldn’t concentrate on his words. All I could think of was how hopeless helping my father is and wonder how much longer I can take care of everyone..

I had talked to Mary about this when it first started to happen. Mary is my best friend, at least she used to be. About a year ago, most of the teenagers stopped going to school. The majority of us left to take care of siblings, others just left their families because they felt like a burden. Mary, though, is the smartest girl I had ever met. She stayed in school because she wants to be a senator when she’s older. We would also talk about how great a senator Mary Johnston would be. However, since I stopped going to school I haven’t seen her.

I was pulled out of thought by the front door being blown open by the wind and the twins walking in while arguing.

“Battling Shaw is so much better than Young Corbett III,” said James.

“No way! Corbett is definitely better---” Joel argued.

“Here Jo,” James interrupted as he set the bread, cans, and eggs on the table followed by Joel’s milk and cheese.

“Thank you guys,” I say and stand up to make

dinner. The boys run off to their room to argue more about boxing and the girls are now messing with the radio to find a different station. We lived in a very small town in Oklahoma, called Alva. It's so small, there's only one neighborhood, and one market on each side of town. It's always so hot and dry here people get sick very easily. Usually because they're dehydrated, but there's always other diseases too.

I had just finished making the grilled cheeses for everyone when we heard someone yelling from outside. Jessie, Julia, and I looked at each other and ran outside. As I got outside, I was recently blinded by my hair being blown into my face.

"It's coming! A dust storm! Everyone! Hide!" a lady was shouting hysterically and running around. My eyes get wide and I turn around and see it. There was a giant dark cloud of dust rushing toward the entire town.

"Go to the cellar!" I yelled "Go get James and Joel," I said to Jessie and ran with Julia to open the cellar. Seconds later James, Joel, and Jessie are in the cellar with us and I close the door and lock it.

"Wait!" Joel yells, "dad." Just then, the wind and sand blew over the door and we all knew it was too late.

The storm left as quickly as it came. I held out my hand to tell my siblings to stay back as I opened the door. The door was much heavier than it was before the storm. The first thing I noticed was the good two inch layer of sand on the ground. When all five of us finally made it out we rushed to the front door. It was wide open and sand was all over the floor inside. We filed inside and I went to check on father while the rest walked around. I noticed the power had gone out. James and Joel turned on the radio for any updates on the storm. I thanked God that that was battery operated.

"... there was just a severe dust storm if you haven't noticed. The first responders are on their way and

the coppers are out for your convenience. We do not yet have a casualty count but we will keep you updated. Thank you.”

“This is some sandwich, Jo.” Julia laughed after she took a bite of a grilled cheese that was left on the counter. I smiled and shook my head, but my smile faded as I got to father’s open door. I looked inside, my heart pounding, and called out for him. There was no response. I called to James to get me the flashlight and he promptly returned with it on. Father’s room was empty.

“Guys, dad’s gone. He’s not in his room. Split up and look for him,” I instruct them and we look around the house. Five minutes have gone by and we still haven’t found him. The house isn’t even big so he must not be inside. I went to the back door which I noticed was cracked open. I opened the door all the way and I saw a few feet away, under the two inches of sand, my father, face down on the ground. There was a broken bottle of whisky in his hand and the same photograph in the other. I bent down and rolled him onto his back, pushing aside the glass shards. As I rolled him over the picture fell out of his hand and I noticed it was a picture of my mother. I picked up the picture and tried to wake my father up but he just wouldn’t stir.

“Guys! I found him! Out back,” I yell to my siblings, “Joel, call 911. He’s not waking up.” Joel’s eyes moved from me to father and back to me before he ran back inside to the landline. Minutes later ambulances were pulling up to the front of the house and strong men ran to the back and got my father breathing again but he wouldn’t wake up. Although they got him to breathe, they still had to take him to the hospital to get back to health and ensure he would wake up.

The next few weeks everything went really slowly. We all took turns selling newspapers on the corner to

earn a little extra money and visited father in the hospital every day. One day, I was sitting in the hospital room talking to him. My siblings were in the lunchroom getting food but I didn't feel like eating.

“Hey dad, it's me, Josephine. It's been three weeks now since you've been in a coma. The doctors say they you may never wake up. I don't know exactly what happened but they said you had too much sand in your lungs and it suffocated you. You were dead for two mins before they got your heart pumping again. Unfortunately, you were without oxygen for too long so now you won't wake up,” I paused for a moment, “I don't even know if you can hear me, but you were a sucky father. Ever since mom died you stopped writing and started drinking. You never cared about James's or Joel's achievements in school, or Jessie's and Julia's art projects. You just yelled at them, and then they'd come to me for support. I'm tired, dad. I'm tired of doing your job and doing it better than you. I can't take care or support this family. You probably didn't even realize that all of us stopped going to school.”

Just then, a nurse came in. Roughly every twenty minutes one comes in to check his pulse and update his charts. I grew quiet and watched her do her job. She walked over to his right wrist and checked his pulse. As she was doing so, her eyebrows grew bunchy and close, then her eyes got sad. She carefully put his hand down and looked at me.

“I'm so sorry, Miss Wills, your father is dead,” the nurse said and wrote something down in the chart. Everything around me grew quiet and slow. I couldn't understand what she was saying and quite honestly, I didn't care. Somewhere along the time of my daze, the nurse had been substituted for my siblings. It was then that I realized I had been crying, staring at my father's corpse.

The next few days were a haze. I don't even know how I got to and from where I was supposed to go. I did find Mary and filled her in on everything but I don't remember what she said. A week after father's death, the hospital stopped by and gave me a box including all his belongings he had on him. In the box was the photograph of mother. It was the only thing worth keeping of all the things he had. As I was staring at the picture I noticed that there was writing on the back. I flipped it over and saw that father had written a love poem to his wife who had died 4 years prior from polio.

“My Beloved

I thought I could do it.

I thought I'd be able to help them.

Turns out they had to help me more.

I wish I could've done it,

If not for me, for you.

But I let you down

And that's the worst mistake I could ever make.”

It was then when I read that poem, that I realized my father was not as bad a dad as I thought he was.

Who am I

Samantha Kuper

We all loved playing the game Who Am I as a kid, I know I did. Looking back I wonder what would I be. People ask who are you? I simply think in my head I am a bustling city full of colors and flashing lights that never die. I am living and breathing as the people of my city move and run, working to keep me upright. The bright colors with buildings scraping the skies and kissing the clouds. I am a city, one that never sleeps. One that wants to grow, and be successful. That's what I am. Im a city that screams with noise both day and night, but even the city has these quiet moments where it seems as though times stops and all the people living in the city don't want to move.

At that moment where all has stopped I become a lock with no one holding the key but me. I shut out the mess and noise hoping that no one will speak to me again. I keep myself locked away. I sit placed lightly in the corner collecting dust as only one holds the key to my lock, for trust was earned and broken for others long ago. As I rust and the joints open and time wears on me. I have began to open up yet again and the city still lives. The knowledge I held locked up in my mind wishes to be spoken. So I will speak and all the people of my city will turn and look. For the knowledge I hold is a story.

No wait, I am not a story in a novel. I'm being read while looking out over the movement of the outside world. I grow with my friends and learn from the mistakes written between my two covers. I am seen from all different views depending on who is listening. I can be seen as a girl who has grown in a life of pain, I can be seen as a woman with no childhood. Though my book is nowhere near done, I will rage on like the roaring forest fire that grows inside of my pages.

The fire rages in the depth of my words and burns a trail for my growth. My words carry meaning as the fire dances along the tops of the trees and breathes in the cool air. My fire begs to be seen but slowly moves along with the wind. Slowly drifting and seeking to be the beauty that is found in the ruins of a once great forest. I'm the light in the darkness that you run to, but only to watch as the embers of the burning trees fall gracefully to the ground.

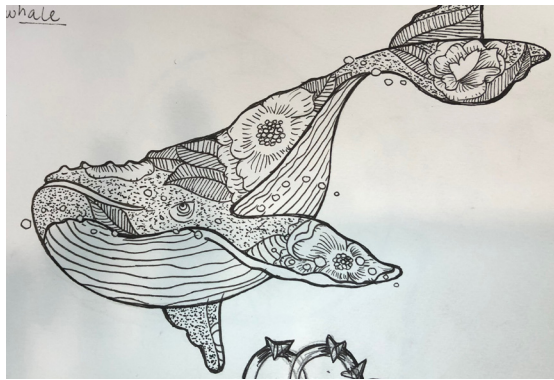
I am all of these and so much more. So when asking "who are you?" maybe you should ask yourself who am I? Let your mind run through the trail my fire has burned. Let your story be not just a chapter in my story but a novel all on its own.

Artwork

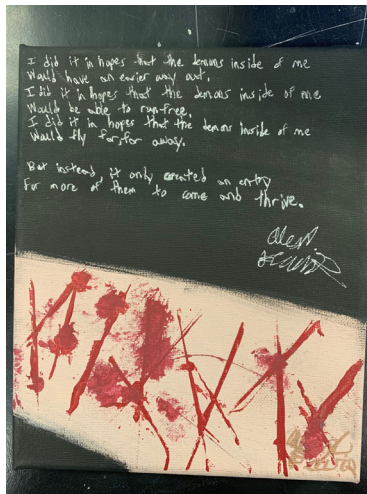
“The purpose of art is washing the
dust of daily life off our souls.”

Pablo Picasso

Drawing & Paintings



Haley Gray | Untitled



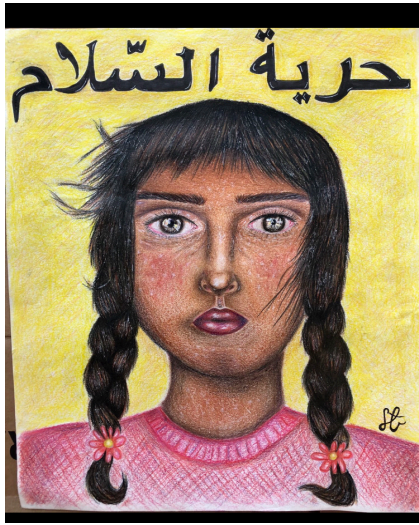
Alexander Davis | My Demons



Ashton Estill | Contenders of the Iron Throne



Ashton Estill | Crow



Savannah Gaast | Peace and Freedom



Savannah Hayton | Explosive Thoughts



Savannah Hayton | Lights



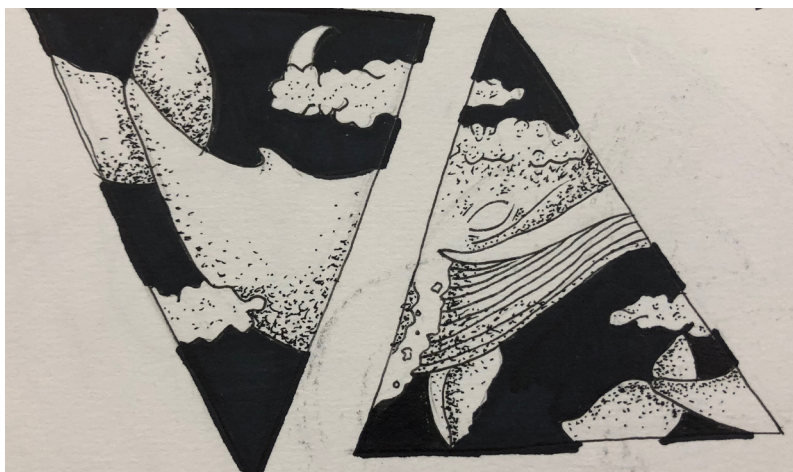
Rose Himmel | Watching Water



Rose Himmel | Earth, Wind, & Water



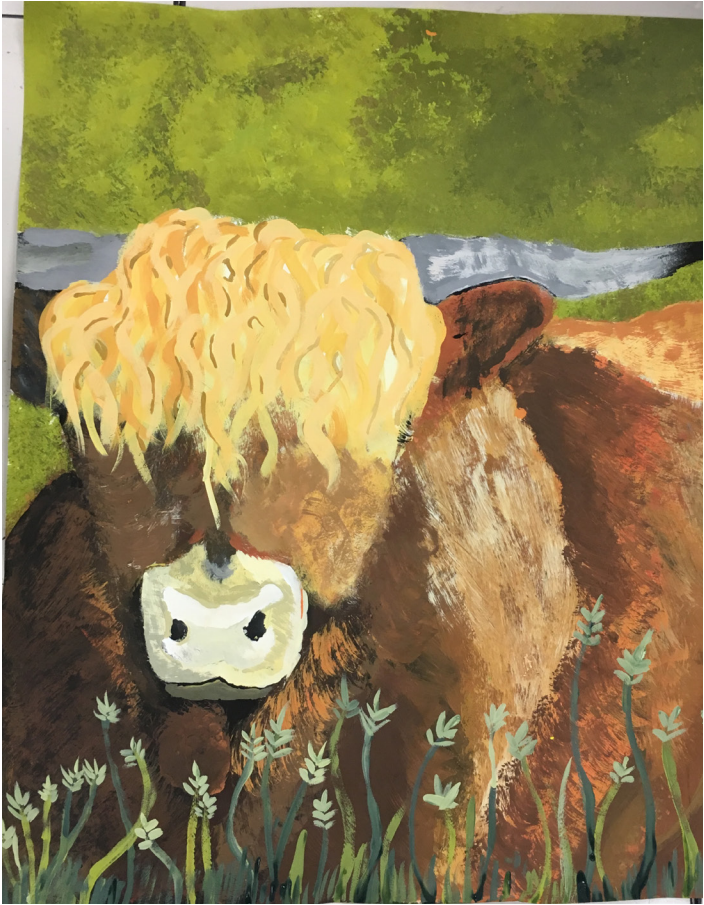
Haley Gray | Untitled



Haley Gray | Untitled



Rhett Ehling | Untitled



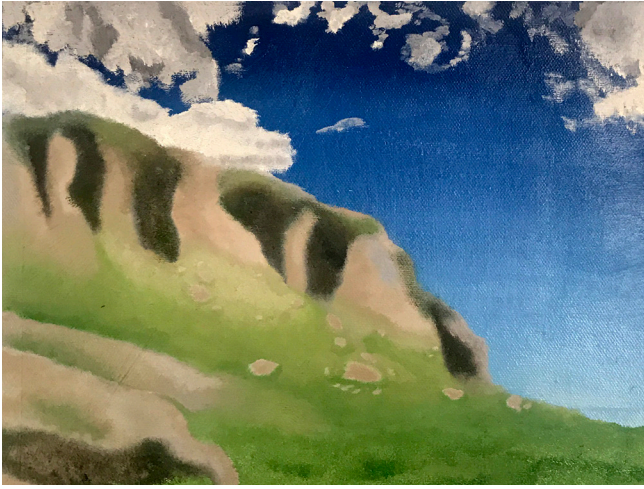
Rhett Ehling | Untitled



Rhett Ehling | Untitled



Ashton Estill | Untitled



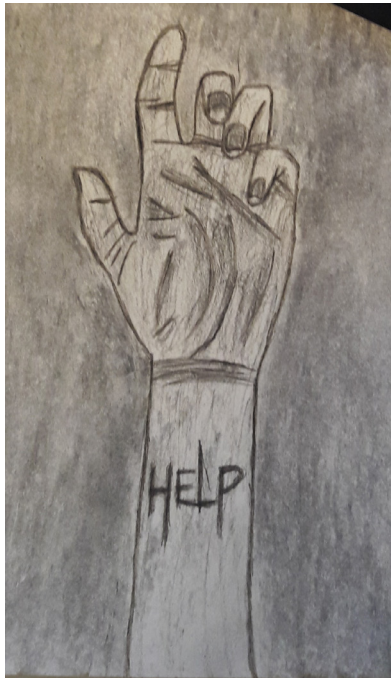
Latay Johnson | In the Plains



Samantha Kuper | The Old Gang



Samantha Kuper | Untitled



Lea Scarborough | Stuck



Abigail Morff | Karma



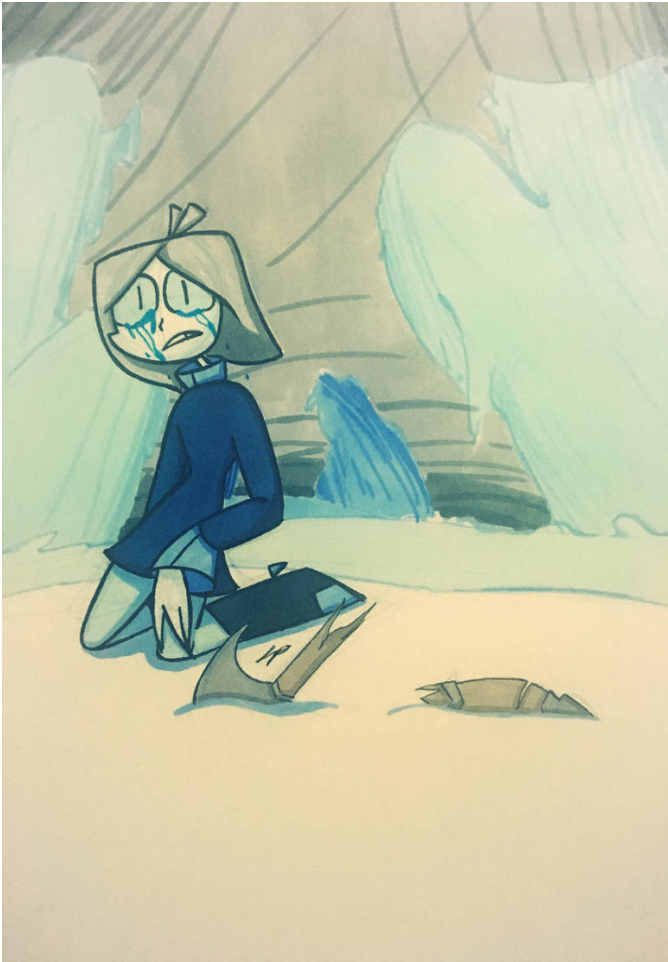
Isabell Tomaszewski | Crescent



Isabell Tomaszewski | Flow



Isabell Tomaszewski | Runrunrunrun



Isabell Tomaszewski | You broke it?

Photography

“Photography is the story I
fail to put into words.”

Destin Sparks



Katie Manker | Purple NYC



Katie Manker | Happy Kitty



Katie Manker | Sleepy Kitty

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Perspectives

2019

Published by the Students of
Timberland High School
559 E Highway N
Wentzville, Mo 63385
Wentzville R-IV School District
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